

Marius Benta

The Assassination of the Marquis de Sade

A one-act play

Cluj-Napoca 2014

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Cover photo by Nicu Cherciu (*fotonicu.wordpress.com*) depicting Catalin Codreanu as THE MARQUIS and Radu Largeanu as ROYER

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First production

The English version of *The Assassination of the Marquis de Sade* has never been produced, as of March 2014. The initial Romanian version (*Asasinarea Marchizului de Sade*) was written in October 2009 at the request of director Oliver László, and was published in 2010 in a book in Romanian (*Povestea povestita nu e povestea adevarata*, Bybliotek Publishing House, Cluj). The play was presented by Oliver László for the first time in Cluj city, on 22nd May, 2010, at National Theatre's Euphorion Studio, casting Catalin Codreanu as THE MARQUIS, Anca Hanu as CONSTANCE, Romina Merei as MADELEINE, and Radu Largeanu as ROYER. The setting was designed by Malina Mandru. Production stage manager was Arhidiade Muresan, lighting was by Alexandru Corpodean, and sound by Vasile Craciun. Total runtime was 80 minutes.



Catalin Codreanu as THE MARQUIS.
Photo by Nicu Cherciu.

The setting

The plot takes place in France at the Charenton asylum in the beginning of the 19th century.

Cast of characters

THE MARQUIS (The Marquis de Sade): Tired and ill, at the dusk of a turbulent life, he only wishes to write and die peacefully.

MADELEINE (Madeleine Leclerc): Daughter of the asylum's laundress, she is genuinely in love with THE MARQUIS and his writings.

CONSTANCE (Constance Quesnet): Caring and devoted companion of THE MARQUIS during the later years of his life, she lives at Charenton passing as his daughter.

ROYER (Dr Antoine Royer-Collard): Chief physician (later: manager) of the Charenton asylum, he hates THE MARQUIS and admires him secretly.

Synopsis

Forced to spend the last years of his life at the Charenton asylum, THE MARQUIS finds his little pleasures in writing his controversial fictions and staging plays for the inmates. He spends his days with his very young lover MADELEINE and his companion CONSTANCE, the latter passing at the asylum as his daughter. Enjoying the sympathy of the asylum's director, THE MARQUIS lives at Charenton a more-or-less comfortable life. However, when the the director is dismissed from office and replaced by the sexually repressed doctor ROYER, the peace of THE MARQUIS is gone. Afraid that THE MARQUIS might use a compromising letter against him, ROYER tortures him to death, and rapes the two women.

The Assassination of the Marquis de Sade

Scene 1

[Year 1814. ROYER writes a letter, seated at his desk. Playing a narrator, MADELEINE addresses the audience.]

MADELEINE. *[with kindness]* Dear Sir, Comte Donatien Claude Armand de Sade. I find myself in the ingrate position of having to communicate to you the news regarding the departure out of this world of your beloved father the Marquis Donatien Alphonse François de Sade. As you have been informed previously, the health of your father had gone through a steady process of degradation over the past months, in spite of the constant care that he had enjoyed at Charenton Saint-Maurice Hospital. The Marquis de Sade passed away at night in his sleep, apparently with no pain. According to his own wish, his body was entombed in

the cemetery of our charity settlement. I am also supposed to inform you of the costs, amounting to sixty-five livres, incurred for the burial of his remnants. We trust that you will not hesitate, as his successor, to take care of these expenses, which add to the total amount of eight thousand nine hundred thirty-four francs already on his statement of hospital care. Here are the detailed costs of the funerals: The cross – twenty livres, the coffin – ten livres, the chapel – six livres, the candles – nine livres, the chaplain – six livres, the bearers – eight livres, and the gravedigger – six livres. Total, as mentioned above, sixty-five livres. As you try to come to terms with this huge loss, please be assured, Monsieur, of our sympathy and our sincere condolences. Doctor Antoine Athanase Royer-Collard.

[ROYER *starts another letter.*]

MADELEINE. [*teasingly*] Monsieur. It is my unfortunate task to inform you of the death of the Marquis Donatien Alphonse François de Sade. Your father left this

world on the date of the second of Decembre. Your father left us in the early morning of today, the second of Decembre, eighteen hundred and fourteen, following a serious outburst of asthma. Following a pulmonary. Following a pulmonary congestion caused by a disease he has had for a long time. You are invited to pay us a visit at the Charenton Saint-Maurice Hospital in order to elucidate the procedures that need to. That need to be fulfilled with no delay, and to clear up the hospital care bill amounting to eight thousand nine hundred thirty-four francs. Eight thousand nine hundred thirty-four francs to which add the burial costs amounting to sixty-five livres. Receive our sincere condolences. Doctor Antoine Athanase Royer-Collard.

[ROYER pours himself wine from a carafe. He sips from his glass, then begins another letter.]

MADELEINE. [*harshly*] Monsieur. We have to inform you that the Marquis de Sade has passed away on the second of Decembre, eighteen hundred and four-

teen, following a painful attack of gout. There are no suspicions surrounding his death. His body was deposited in the hospital's graveyard. The total expenses connected to the care of your father amount to eight thousand nine hundred thirty-four francs and sixty-five livres. You are requested to contact us immediately to clear up financial matters. Doctor Antoine Athanase Royer-Collard.

Scene 2

[In his room full of books, manuscripts, and notebooks, THE MARQUIS writes something in a notebook, his feet in a wash bowl. At times, he laughs as he reads the words aloud. We hear a horse neighing and trotting.]

THE MARQUIS. ‘The athletic Monsieur Dolmance lied down on the couch so that the two young ladies could study freely the anatomic area that made the object of the lesson. Madame de Saint-Ange began explaining¹ to the younger and inexperienced Eugénie: This scepter of Venus that you’re contemplating right now is the main agent of pleasure in love: We call it the

¹The ‘explanation’ is an excerpt from the Marquis de Sade’s book, *La Philosophie dans le boudoir* (1795), Dialogue III.

member, and there is no part of the human body where it couldn't be...'

[CONSTANCE *enters in a hurry, dressed for a journey.*]

CONSTANCE. Chérie, you didn't tell me what you need from town.

THE MARQUIS. [*finishing the sentence*] 'Where it couldn't be... sticked into.' [*to CONSTANCE*] You said 'from town'? Which town?

CONSTANCE. Come on, Dodo. I don't have time for jokes. The carriage is ready, and I don't want to let the director wait for me.

THE MARQUIS. Oh! You're going in a journey with the Abbot? You're making me jealous, Constance!

CONSTANCE. Last time you filed complaints that the foie gras wasn't fat enough, and the smoked sausage wasn't smoked enough. Now, please let me know exactly what you want me to buy for you.

THE MARQUIS. Bring me a bottle full of love, my precious!

CONSTANCE. I'll buy a bottle of wine, and smash it on your head!

[On exiting, CONSTANCE stumbles upon MADELEINE, who was about to enter.]

MADELEINE. *[taking a quick bow]* Madame!

CONSTANCE. Merde! What a nerd. Today he's not able to speak any human understandable language.

THE MARQUIS. Today let us all speak in tongues of angels! Why, look who's here! My little Madeleine, always charming and cheerful! How about you? You too would you like to smash a bottle of wine on my head today?

MADELEINE. Ha ha, Monsieur le Marquis, always clever and adorable! I think I'd rather empty it out over your naked body. Then try the taste of flesh on a few peculiar areas.

THE MARQUIS. How insolent!

[MADELEINE hand-checks the water temperature in the wash bowl.]

MADELEINE. The water has chilled. You're going to get sick, Monsieur.

THE MARQUIS. And you fear I might die?

[MADELEINE takes away the wash bowl, and wipes THE MARQUIS' feet with a towel, then helps him put on socks and shoes. The fading noise of a carriage is heard.]

MADELEINE. I just want to be sure you'll finish the novel you've started last month. I don't want to miss the ending.

THE MARQUIS. Worry not, my dear. Evil people die hard. Now tell me what you wanted to tell.

MADELEINE. What?

THE MARQUIS. I don't know. But you were obviously anxious to deliver some important piece of news.

MADELEINE. Well. And what do I receive in exchange

for a piece of good news?

THE MARQUIS. Hmm... Let me think. How good?

MADELEINE. Awsome!

THE MARQUIS. Mademoiselle Madeleine, this isn't about what you get. It's about how you take it.

MADELEINE. How insolent! [*a beat*] Well, the good news is that your performance has been approved.

THE MARQUIS. Unbelievable.

MADELEINE. It's true. Today I glanced in the Abbot's office when nobody was around, and I noticed your proposal on his desk. It was approved and signed. 'The play Florville and Courval will be staged at the Char-
enton Hospital for the first time on the twelfth of January, eighteen hundred and fifteen, and Mister Donatien Alphonse François de Sade is being appointed responsible for the casting procedures and the rehearsal schedule.' [*MADELEINE installs herself in his lap.*] I take it you already have the casting in mind.

THE MARQUIS. I surely do.

MADELEINE. Oh, I'm dying to find out who's going to play Courval!

THE MARQUIS. Courval? Well, who's the most curvy of all the lunatic boys around here?

MADELEINE. Who, other than Lepayen? Oh, but he's going to have a problem learning his lines by heart. He'll mess all your play up.

THE MARQUIS. So much for the better, then! This only means we'll have a good laugh.

MADELEINE. How about the role of Mademoiselle de Florville?

THE MARQUIS. Ah, for that role I have a very special person in mind.

MADELEINE. You're not thinking of Mariah von Hysteria?

THE MARQUIS. Oh, no. I'm thinking of someone more natural-looking. After all, we're talking about the key role of the play, aren't we?

MADELEINE. Constance, then?

THE MARQUIS. Constance has been playing in my dra-

mas for years, but now she's totally fed up with this.
No, it's not Constance.

[MADELEINE *kisses him.*]

MADELEINE. I'll never have enough of your stories!

THE MARQUIS. Are you serious?

MADELEINE. Very serious. So let me guess who's going
to play Florville.

THE MARQUIS. Take a guess, then.

MADELEINE. The name begins with A?

THE MARQUIS. No.

MADELEINE. With E?

THE MARQUIS. No.

MADELEINE. With M?

THE MARQUIS. Yes.

MADELEINE. I know! The role Florville will be played
by Maah...

THE MARQUIS. Maah...

MADELEINE. Maa-deleine!

THE MARQUIS. [*together with her*] Maar-quis!

MADELEINE. [*intrigued*] By the Marquis? [*laughing*] Of course! You will make a sublime character in the role of the beautiful, sensitive Florville.

THE MARQUIS. Of course. I myself am probably as delicate and sensitive as a latrine seat.

[*He simulates a loud flatulation.*]

MADELEINE. Ha ha! I can't wait to watch those scenes when Lepayen will hold you in his arms! It's going to be delicious.

THE MARQUIS. I've already thought of a number of, let's say, untypical positions with him.

[*They start playing, as a joke, a scene between Courval and Florville.*]

MADELEINE. [*with deep voice, as Courval*] 'Oh, my ravishing, divine Florville!'

THE MARQUIS. [*in high pitch, as Florville*] 'Oh, my dear, sweet Courval!'

MADELEINE. 'I want to love you now.'

THE MARQUIS. 'Let's love now! But where shall we do it?'

MADELEINE. 'I don't know. I'm sick of doing it on the desk every time.'

THE MARQUIS. 'Let's do it *with* the desk, then.' [*They laugh. A beat.*] To tell you the truth, actually, you were right. Florville is to be played by the most talented actress at Charenton: Mademoiselle Madeleine Leclerc.

[*MADELEINE claps her hands and kisses him.*]

MADELEINE. Thank you so much, Monsieur. You've just made my day! [*Steps are heard outside.*] Merde! That must be Royer. He's been lurking around like a ghost all day.

[*MADELEINE steps away from THE MARQUIS, and makes herself look busy: She takes the wash bowl and a rag, and starts cleaning the floor. ROYER enters, glacial.*]

ROYER. [*to THE MARQUIS*] Mister de Sade. In ten minutes you will be in my office for our weekly investigation.

THE MARQUIS. I will not disappoint you, doctor.

[*ROYER exits. MADELEINE and THE MARQUIS mock ROYER and laugh.*]

Scene 3

[ROYER's office: Table, couch, books, bottles of medicines, and a skull. THE MARQUIS is seated on the couch, and ROYER walks around the room.]

ROYER. Mister de Sade, I cannot stop being concerned over the state of your health.

THE MARQUIS. The pain in my bones hasn't been torturing me so much these days.

ROYER. I am first of all concerned over your mental health.

THE MARQUIS. Oh, of course. My mental health.

ROYER. You remember I have recommended you to take some time out from your writing activities, don't you?

THE MARQUIS. I did take a two-hour break today after lunch.

ROYER. You need a much longer break, Mister de Sade. Besides, your privileged position here at Charenton

should not be a reason to putting in danger the peace of mind and the emotional balance of the other inmates, many of which suffer from serious diseases.

THE MARQUIS. You probably mean the little dramas that we put up here with the inmates.

ROYER. Exactly. But I'm also thinking of your writing activities in general, which trouble every day the tranquility of our settlement.

THE MARQUIS. How is that, doctor?

ROYER. Mademoiselle Leclerc and you seem to try hard to maintain a certain façade concerning your friendship. But her untypically frequent visits to your room keep sprouting various suppositions and inferences about the motives of such visits. Mademoiselle Leclerc displays not only a deep understanding of your writings, but a very good textual memory, too. As a result, the members of our community seem to be well informed of the developments of your stories as soon as your deranged mind has put them together on paper. This fact produces much pain to our inmates and

much concern to the caregivers of this hospital.

THE MARQUIS. Please allow me to remind you, doctor Royer, that the management of this institution has approved the staging of my plays precisely as a complementary therapy.

ROYER. A rather unfruitful therapy method.

THE MARQUIS. The Abbot doesn't share your opinion.

ROYER. The Abbot, let aside his good intentions and inventive spirit, has no credentials in clinical psychiatry. The only one here to have a say on the effectiveness of a particular therapy is me.

THE MARQUIS. You're denying that inmates are more lighthearted and the atmosphere at Charenton is more agreeable when our dramas are being performed?

ROYER. The atmosphere is definitely steaming and the whole asylum turns into a hell broken loose during your shows, indeed! Mental health and balance are the last things that these miserable people gain from your sick fictions. You want them to identify with characters who commit crimes, perversions, incests,

canibalism, or suicide, then expect them to regain their mental balance? Any sound man would turn psychotic after reading any of your books.

THE MARQUIS. How many of my books have you read?

ROYER. Five! [*THE MARQUIS exults.*] I haven't read any of your books in full. I've just browsed them.

THE MARQUIS. Doctor, I would like you to know that the next drama I'm planning to stage with the inmates is a play that I wrote a few years ago. It's a political pamphlet with great healing properties that's going to cast upon its spectators the most beneficial influence.

Scene 4

[In THE MARQUIS' room, MADELEINE tides up the furniture and sings. Suddenly, she stops.]

MADELEINE. *[aside]* The Abbot was so deep in his thoughts today. I don't think I've ever seen him so upset. And I'm sure everything is because of that freaky doctor, Royer. They must have had a short fight – Marie has heard them in the abbot's office. I should have told Constance about that, and asked her to try and find out more from the Abbot himself on their way to town. I fear. I fear that Royer is planning to cut out the best parts from the Marquis' new play. As always. He always wants to cut out the best parts of the Marquis' plays. That must be it. But shouldn't the Abbot have the last say on these matters? Well, I think it's

the abbot who should decide what's to be staged here.
Because he's the director, isn't he? Isn't he?

Scene 5

[This is no longer year 1814, but 1803. ROYER and THE MARQUIS have dinner. Both look younger; THE MARQUIS also looks thinner and healthier.]

ROYER. Now that we've talked about politics, Mister Marquis, I'm very curious to learn more about your recent play where you talk about the creation of a European union.²

THE MARQUIS. You mean my recent political pamphlet.

ROYER. Yes, indeed.

THE MARQUIS. I've exposed there my ideas related to a unification and a new regionalisation of our continent, which is to be reduced to four republic states.

²This scene is an altered and shortened version of a dialogue between a Spanish Brigandos and a nobleman written by the Marquis de Sade in his novel *Aline et Valcour* published in 1795.

ROYER. Four republic states? And which are those republics?

THE MARQUIS. Well, naturally: The Northern Republic, The Southern Republic, The Eastern Republic, and The Western Republic.

ROYER. Amazing.

THE MARQUIS. In my play, Strasbourg is a free and neutral city, where each of these republics has its own parliament. [*Enters CONSTANCE with a carafe of wine; she, too, looks younger.*] The Western Republic includes France, Spain, Portugal, Mallorca, Minorca, Sardinia, and Corsica, but these countries have been cleared up of all the inquisition and the priests, who have all been sent to Africa. The Northern Republic comprises Sweden, England, Belgium, The Netherlands, Westfalia, Denmark, and Ireland. Russia alone makes The Eastern Republic. [*CONSTANCE and THE MARQUIS mimic kisses from distance and exchange silent love talk without ROYER acknowledging it.*] And The Southern Republic unites the whole Germany,

Hungary, and Italy – where I’ve chased away the Pope. My plan ensures an endless peace between these governments.

ROYER. [*glancing at CONSTANCE*] Your daughter, Monsieur de Sade, has a truly fascinating personality.

THE MARQUIS. Who? Oh yes, my daughter. Of course, of course. Constance has always been a very special child.

ROYER. She proved such a noble heart when she decided to follow you here at Charenton.

THE MARQUIS. So true. But let us go back to our discussion. The new Europe will be a continent free from preconceived ideas and dogmas. Not religion or morals will govern it, but the very consciousness of its citizens.

ROYER. Brilliant!

THE MARQUIS. So, how do you find my plan, doctor?

ROYER. It is truly the work of a genius mind, Mister Marquis. I hope you’re going to publish these ideas in a new book.

THE MARQUIS. I hope that, too. Of course, as long as some publisher would want to accept my play for print.

ROYER. Oh, you don't need to worry about that. I will recommend you to Monsieur Massé from Paris, a trustworthy publisher and a good friend of mine. And I'm going to write down your recommendation letter today.

Scene 6

[Back in 1814. In THE MARQUIS' room, MADELEINE jitters and frolics on the couch like a spoilt kid. Enters CONSTANCE, who sits down on a chair, worried.]

MADELEINE. Madame? What happened?

CONSTANCE. What are we going to do now, my little Madeleine?

MADELEINE. I thought you went shopping.

CONSTANCE. I had to turn back. Where is Dodo?

MADELEINE. At his weekly investigation. Tell me now, Madame. What on earth is going on?

[CONSTANCE points to the manuscripts.]

CONSTANCE. The books!

[MADELEINE struggles to understand.]

Scene 7

[ROYER and THE MARQUIS go on with their dialogue interrupted at the end of Scene 3 in 1814.]

THE MARQUIS. I can guarantee you, doctor Royer, that you will find this political comedy totally delicious.

ROYER. How can you be so sure that I could ever enjoy anything produced by your sick imagination?

THE MARQUIS. Because, if you are so kind to remember, eleven years ago you wrote with your own hand a letter of recommendation for the play in question. And I am very curious to know the opinion of, say, the Minister of Police, should he read that letter, and learn how much ‘wit and charm one can find in this play written by the Marquis de Sade’ – quoted from memory.

ROYER. Is that so? Now, just because you've mentioned the Minister of Police, let me inform you that the minister himself has ordered that Monsieur de Coulmier be dismissed from his position of director. As of today, the manager of this hospital is me. You may leave now. Oh, one more thing. As of today, too, you are being granted Room Number Two, which is located in the underground premises. Given that our hospital no longer requires your services in the realm of the so-called drama therapy, your writing activities can now be described as purposeless. Therefore, the presence, in Room Number Two, of any book, any piece of paper, and any writing instrument is strictly forbidden. Whoever breaks this rule is to be subjected to severe punishments.

Scene 8

[*THE MARQUIS walks around in Room Number Two – a prison cell with only a shabby bed and a dirty bucket. Enters CONSTANCE holding a pack wrapped in paper.*]

THE MARQUIS. Constance!

CONSTANCE. Shh! I can't stay long. I had a hard time trying to bribe the guard.

[*They embrace in silence.*]

THE MARQUIS. Did you bring quill and paper?

CONSTANCE. I couldn't. I brought just food. Royer made a mess of your room upstairs. I've no idea what he's after.

THE MARQUIS. I do. He's looking for a particular let-

ter. The recommendation letter that he never sent to Massé.

CONSTANCE. [*browsing her memory*] Recommendation letter... Oh, but that was five years ago!

THE MARQUIS. Actually, more than ten years ago.

CONSTANCE. Don't tell me you black-mailed him with that letter?

THE MARQUIS. Could I have missed the opportunity?

CONSTANCE. And where is the letter now?

THE MARQUIS. You don't remember what I did with it?

CONSTANCE. [*laughs as she remembers*] Yes, I do! Will you tell Royer?

THE MARQUIS. Maybe not.

CONSTANCE. But he could keep you in jail forever because of it. Or even...

THE MARQUIS. My life has no longer any price for me. I've wiped my arse with it long ago. Constance, my dearest, I'll tell you a secret. Neither Life nor Death can come to us without our permission.

Scene 9

[ROYER alone in his office, reading a book that provides him with great satisfaction.]

ROYER. [*reading aloud*] ‘Oh, Madame de Saint-Ange, what a delicate shoulder!’

[*Enters CONSTANCE.*]

CONSTANCE. Doctor Royer...

ROYER. I don’t have time for you.

CONSTANCE. I tried to visit the Marquis, and they wouldn’t let me in. They said they had strict orders from you.

ROYER. Mister de Sade needs special care these days. The state of his mental health has considerably deteriorated.

CONSTANCE. Special care in Room Number Two? That’s not even a room. It’s a prison cell!

ROYER. Mister de Sade enjoys, in Room Number Two, the standard care procedures applied to all the patients in his condition.

CONSTANCE. You're killing him! That room is cold and dirty. You even took away his notebooks. You're making his life so miserable! Hasn't he suffered enough so far?

ROYER. Madame, this conversation is not acceptable. You are not in a position to question my authority or my instructions related to the medical treatment administered to my patients.

CONSTANCE. But I am in a position to...

ROYER. Should you not reconsider your position, I will be forced to take proper measures in your respect.

CONSTANCE. I am definitely in a position to ask such questions, because I am extremely concerned over the well being of my father!

ROYER. Your father, all right! How touching. What a heartbreaking love of a daughter for her father.

CONSTANCE. I want to remind you, doctor Royer, that

my father is not a prisoner here. There has been no trial or court decision for his freedom of movement or expression to be limited.

[ROYER *violently heaves her onto his desk.* CONSTANCE *struggles to escape.*]

ROYER. You, hypocrite shrew, listen to me! Nobody puts up with the story you concocted when you two came here at Charenton. Everybody knows now that you're his bitch, just like that little pervert witch, the daughter of the launderess.

CONSTANCE. Doctor!

ROYER. And, all these years, the Abbot knew it. But he worked hand in hand with your sick lover. Whom do you think you're fooling now? The Abbot is no longer in charge here. From now on, you're all going to listen to me!

CONSTANCE. Take your hands off me, you rascal!

[ROYER *slaps her face several times.* CONSTANCE

quiets.]

ROYER. And now, Madame, we will make love. And I recommend that you make use of your highest skills as libertine lover. Should your performance be rated as acceptable enough, your beloved 'father' might be granted more freedom by the management of this hospital. Should your performance be rated as unacceptable, you might be declared persona non grata at Char-
enton.

CONSTANCE. The hell with you, lizard!

[CONSTANCE spits into his face. ROYER reaches a presse-papier and hits CONSTANCE on the head. She loses consciousness for a few minutes. ROYER rapes her. As he gasps and moans over her body, CONSTANCE comes to, and starts to cry. Then he stands up, buttons up his clothes, regains composure, and exits. CONSTANCE tries to stand and walk, but collapses.]

Scene 10

[Seated on the bucket-toilet in Room Number Two, THE MARQUIS sings La Marseillaise. MADELEINE enters and produces from under her clothes a pack of writing paper.]

THE MARQUIS. That's all?

MADELEINE. Couldn't bring more. The guardian wouldn't let me, though I'm paying him every time more.

THE MARQUIS. Where is Constance? She promised she'd bring me a new quill.

MADELEINE. Constance had to leave. That doctor is a monster.

THE MARQUIS. Where did she go?

MADELEINE. I don't know.

THE MARQUIS. Let me know when you have news from

her. Madeleine, I need more paper. I need to write, do you understand that?

MADELEINE. I do understand you, my dear Marquis, but...

THE MARQUIS. This is the only thing that helps me survive. These stories, which cry to reach out of my head.

MADELEINE. The editor says your last two books are sold out already.

[They hug.]

THE MARQUIS. Come back tomorrow. I need more ink, too.

MADELEINE. Tomorrow I can't. After tomorrow.

THE MARQUIS. Tomorrow.

MADELEINE. After tomorrow. We need to be very careful. Royer doesn't have to know that you write here. You know how much he hates you.

Scene 11

[In Room Number Two, naked and pegged to the wall, THE MARQUIS receives whip lashes from ROYER, who hits every time he speaks.]

ROYER. The presence. In Room. Number. Two. Of any. Book. Any piece. Of paper. And any. Writing. Instrument.

THE MARQUIS. Stop! *[lashing goes on]* Please, stop. Please. I can't bear this. Please, doctor!

[Lashing halts. THE MARQUIS gasps for a while, then simulates a loud flatulation, and bursts into laughter. Furious, ROYER starts whipping again.]

ROYER. Is! Strictly! Forbidden!

[With each hit, THE MARQUIS releases a simulated flatulation that sounds every time different: Low, high,

long, short, etc. As the flagellation goes on, MADELEINE talks as a narrator.]

MADELEINE. [*with academic voice*] While most of us relate BDSM practices to irrational violence and shocking images of gear made of leather and metal, informed people know that such techniques involve, first of all, an emotional dimension that opens the gate to a different plane of consciousness. This, in specific terms, is called a subspace. [*Flagellation stops. Lights off.*] Violence, in sadomasochism, is only a vehicle, an instrument. [*Strong light. In an alien world, THE MARQUIS flies.*] A vehicle that allows the submissive to be transported into a state of bliss, flight or floating similar to the effects of drugs or alcohol when pain and suffering melt away to be replaced by extatic feelings that cannot be accessed through ordinary methods. The subspace is a state of sub-consciousness induced by the dominating agent to the submissive one through a set of gradually controlled acts of violence.

This gives rise, at physiological level, to a chain of chemical reactions and hormone production. Endorphins, enkephalins, and epinephrins are released into the blood. These opium-like substances alter one's perception of reality. Abandoning the everyday structures of reality and entering a state of volitive inability is a consequence of the parasympathetic nervous system's response mechanisms. Recent research has shown that the subspace is, more or less, a universal condition throughout the animal world. This state can be thought of as the moment of highest intensity in the relationship between pray and predator.

Scene 12

[Low light. THE MARQUIS lies dead on the ground in Room Number Two. MADELEINE talks to spectators, and continues her monologue from the previous scene.]

MADELEINE. As paradoxical as it might sound, it is well-known that, the very moment a predator grabs hold of its prey, the latter is invaded by a feeling of complete happiness – whether we are talking about an antelope in the jaws of a lion or a poor wild mouse in the sharp venomous teeth of a snake. Ancient human societies of hunter-gatherers knew that. Think of the ‘mutual consensus’ of BDSM practices. Similarly, traditional hunters used to perform specific rituals before they actually killed their prey. By doing that, they would ask the animal’s permission to be slaughtered

and consumed. [*Gradually, lights on. We can see now bed linen filled with red words that THE MARQUIS has written in blood using his fingers.*] These were laws that the modern societies have forgotten. Because, most of the time, modern laws go against the laws of nature. And when the laws of nature are observed in a modern society, moralists call it ‘anarchy’. People of all ages, people of all sexes, come and unite in love!

Scene 13

[ROYER *writes a letter, seated at his desk. Enters MADELEINE. Her mind seems somewhere else.*]

MADELEINE. You...

[ROYER *stands up, surprised.*]

ROYER. What do you want?

MADELEINE. You...

ROYER. What? [MADELEINE *tries to answer, but her words don't come out. ROYER walks closer and inspects her.*] What you desire, little whore, I know so well.

[ROYER *reaches under her clothes. She shows no sign of resistance. He rapes her with no effort. When he finishes, he goes back to his desk, sips from a glass of wine, and starts writing.*]

MADELEINE. [*to spectators*] This is to inform you of the invoice that you, as heir of Mister Donatien Alphonse François de Sade, are expected to pay to the Char-
enton Hospital. The costs amount to eight thousand
nine hundred thirty-four francs incurred for hospital
care and sixty-five livres incurred for the burial cere-
mony, following his death on the date of the second of
December. You are requested to contact us immedi-
ately in order to settle the above-mentioned financial
matters. Doctor Antoine Athanase Royer-Collard.

The End